

GEN

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 03020 5543

Gc 974.902 N36s
Scholten, George Benjamin.
Souvenir of the one hundred
seventy-fifth anniversary ...
Neshanic Reformed Church ...

✓

4741

NJ
[Scholten]
vol. m

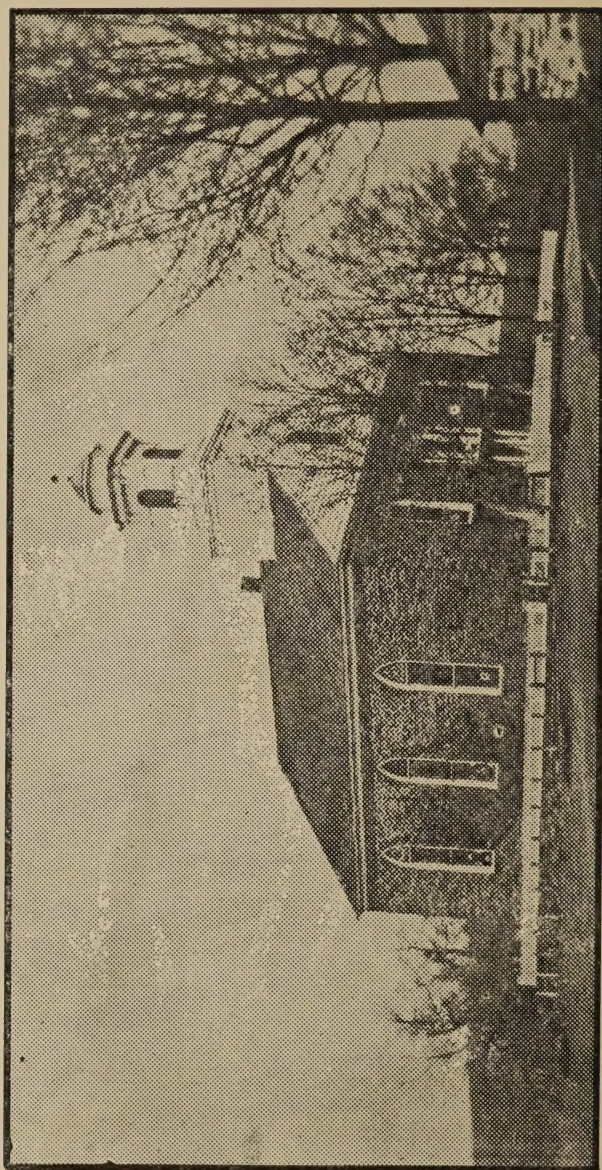
25

The
Neshanic
Reformed Church



1752 - 1927

One Hundred Seventy-fifth Anniversary



The Neshanic Reformed Church Twenty-five Years Ago

Souvenir
of the
One Hundred Seventy-fifth
Anniversary
of the
Neshanic Reformed Church
of Neshanic, New Jersey

34 - SCHOLTEN



Rev. John Hart, D.D., Pastor Emeritus
Rev. George Benjamin Scholten, Pastor

Allen County Public Library
900 Webster Street
PO Box 2270
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270

RECORD OF PASTORS

FRELINGHUYSEN, JOHN	1752-1754
HARDENBERGH, JACOB RUTSEN	1758-1761
VAN HARLINGEN, JOHANNES MARTINUS.....	1762-1795
FROELIGH, SOLOMON	1780-1786
SMITH, WILLIAM RICHMOND	1794-1820
POLHEMUS, HENRY	1798-1808
LABAGH, PETER	1809-1821
LUDLOW, GABRIEL	1821-1878
HART, JOHN (Pastor Emeritus 1922—)	1875-1922
VAN STRIEN, JOHN JAMES	1922-1926
SCHOLTEN, GEORGE BENJAMIN	1926-

PREFACE

I want, first of all, to express my gratitude to the many persons in and about the Neshanic congregation who have given me their kind assistance in the preparation of this historical sketch. Several have loaned me books, invaluable for such a study of the history of the church as I have made, imperfect though my investigations may have been. Others have given me much personal information.

I desire, also, to acknowledge my indebtedness to Rev. John Hart, D. D., and Rev. John J. Van Strien, the two surviving former pastors, for laying open to my disposal such facts as were in their possession.

Chief among the books which have shed much light for me on Neshanic's One Hundred Seventy-Five Years have been:

Corwin's Manuals (Editions of 1902 and 1922).

Abraham Messler's "Memorial Sermons and Historical Notes."

John A. Todd's "Memoirs of the Rev. Peter Labagh."

Edward T. Corwin's "Millstone Centennial Memorial," 1866.

Rev. Gabriel Ludlow's "Fifty Years a Pastor." 1871.

Somerset County Historical Quarterly.

A. D. Mellick's "Story of an Old Farm."

Wm. O. Van Eyck's "Landmarks of the Reformed Fathers,"

P. F. Struass's "History of the Harlingen Reformed Church." 1927.

In fact, Rev. Strauss has so fully and adequately portrayed the history of the Neshanic Church in her early collegiate association with the Harlingen Church that for me to narrate that early history once more—I refer to Neshanic's history, up to the pastorate of Rev. Gabriel Ludlow—must seem to those who already have read Strauss's work as a needless repetition.

The consistorial records of the church, from the beginning of Rev. W. R. Smith's ministry, are intact right up to the present minutes. What a joy to find that Smith, Ludlow, and Hart were all good penmen and used ink which, for the most part, has withstood the gnawing tooth of time. The fact that the minutes of the church for 128 years are transcribed in the careful handwriting of but four men has made the matter of reading these records far easier than had these minutes been written in the good, bad, and indifferent penmanship of twenty or more men as is the usual case over such a long period of time.

There is a good deal of great interest which cannot even be touched upon in a sketch such as this, but I shall try to set down

those salient facts that will give the congregation at least a hazy idea of what the history of this church has been and which, I trust, will make them appreciate a little better than before their duties and privileges in this ancient church at Neshanic.

G. B. S.

HISTORY OF THE NESHANIC REFORMED CHURCH'S ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

The Neshanic Reformed Church, this year, 1927, celebrates its One Hundred Seventy-fifth anniversary. But how can we celebrate such an anniversary unless we know what the history of the church has been? So let us browse around in old minute books, ancient church records, musty files, and such volumes of history as may be unearthed in our search for information, to see what we may be able to learn about the events that have transpired in and around the spot where this historic church still stands.

In and about the year 1718, the four "collegiate" churches of Raritan (now the First Reformed in Somerville), "North Branch" (now Readington), Six Mile Run (Franklin Park), and New Brunswick applied to the denominational headquarters in Holland for a permanent pastor. In 1719, Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, a young Dutch minister, was sent out to them in the good ship "King George," and this first minister of the Reformed Church in Central New Jersey preached his first sermon in Somerset County on January 31, 1720. Frelinghuysen did a magnificent piece of work in firmly establishing the Dutch Church in Somerset County. He was a man of sterling worth and such divines as Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Gilbert Tennent have left where those who run may read, their marked appreciation of the life and character of the man by whose diligence and faithfulness "the wilderness was converted into the garden of the Lord." Somerset County has been called "the garden of the Reformed Church." All honor to this early gardener who cared so nicely for the first small plants that began to peep forth from the ground.

Every one of Frelinghuysen's five sons entered the ministry of the Reformed Dutch Church and his two daughters married ministers of the same communion. The name of Frelinghuysen is a distinguished one in Reformed Church history.

Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen's parish was a parish of magnificent distances, covering no less than three hundred square miles of territory, but this did not deter him from adding to his labors by organizing another church "op de Millstone," now the Harlingen Church. This apostle of the strenuous life so spent himself in his zeal for the Master that he died before his fifty-seventh year and it is a tragic circumstance that it must be said of this Moses of the Somerset County Reformed churches, "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day," although tradition has it that he lies buried in the old Six Mile Run graveyard.

Dominie John Frelinghuysen, 1752-1754

Upon his death, the five churches—now five because of the addition of Harlingen—divided, New Brunswick and Six Mile Run going off by themselves and calling a Rev. John Leydt. The three others, Raritan, North Branch, and Harlingen, called their old pastors' second son, John, to become their pastor. John Frelinghuysen had been born at Three Mile Run in the year 1727, exactly two hundred years ago this year. He preached his first sermon in the Raritan Church in the summer of 1750, taking as his text, "Instead of the fathers shall be thy children." He had just returned from Holland where he had been to obtain from the Classis of Amsterdam a license to preach the gospel. He brought with him from the Netherlands a wife, a woman of such excellence and piety that it is said that during her long life of fifty-six years in Somerset County few ministers exercised more influence for good than did she. There is a most interesting account of the life and character of this good "mother in Israel" and the special providences that led her to marry young Frelinghuysen and afterward young Rev. Hardenbergh in a book called "The Story of an Old Farm," written by Andrew D. Mellick, Jr. Also, in the Sage Library at New Brunswick Seminary, there is preserved the ancient journal which this remarkable woman wrote in the year 1747, some three years before she met the young theological student, John Frelinghuysen.

But we must on with our story. John Frelinghuysen took charge of the aforementioned three churches in 1750. Two years later, to be exact, on the 25th of August, 1752, the Neshanic Reformed Church was organized and established. Let us examine the old records written in the hand of Rev. John Frelinghuysen himself in the Dutch language to see how this organization, now so interesting to us, came about. We shall be helped by some kind soul by the name of Samuel Streng who, at a date unknown to the writer of his history, took the time and trouble to translate the old Dutch records as well as he was able. Since the Rev. Frelinghuysen's penmanship is particularly atrocious, we are more than ever pleased.

We note, first of all, that the church book is calculated to contain,—“the proceedings of the consistories of the two churches of Milston and Neschenick” (Harlingen and Neshanic), but there are no Harlingen records to be found in the entire book. The book was kept in hodge-podge fashion and, at first glance, would appear to have been inscribed on the first page on the 25th of August, 1752, but to have been neglected for the next ten years,

for on page 3 we have the minutes of a consistory meeting held "September den 24, 1762." But a good way into the book we find what we are looking for, "The request of some members and adherents of the Church of Jesus Christ at Noortbrensch, with some others who live far away from all churches, for the establishment of a new church."

"Whereas we, the undersigned, who live around or near the Neschennick, are far away from the other churches where the gospel is preached, and are debarred of sufficient opportunity to attend the means of grace,

"Therefore, we propose to the serious consideration of all those who prize the means of grace and the salvation of their souls, this following, so as to obtain the presenting of the gospel among us :

"1. That by a neighboring minister and by churches concerning whose legality there is no dispute, with the knowledge and approval of the Reverend Coetus, there shall be established a new church here, and that indeed on this wise: That first there be four consistory members chosen, and, indeed, to keep out of all disagreements, and to avoid further disturbances, that these persons be impartial men, not involved in the differences which are current among our neighbors, or, if they should be counted, in one respect or another, as leaning either toward the one side or toward the other, that half shall be chosen from each side: the further changes in consistory to take place without reference to former differences which we hold do not affect us.

"2. We desire that the newly chosen consistory shall stand in connection with three churches, Raritan, Noortbrensch, and Milston, and take with them for their lawful minister, Rev. Joh. Frieling-huyzen, and to sit, as lawful Consistory members in the great Consistory of the three above-named churches.

"3. We desire that a church for the newly established congregation be established somewhere between David Genoe's dwelling place and Laurensis Line: the place to be more definitely determined by a majority vote. No one shall be admitted to vote except those who have contributed something toward the building of the church.

"Ye, then, who shall be privileged hereby with sufficient opportunity to attend the means of grace,—ye, who wish Zion well and to whose heart the extension of Christ's Kingdom appeals, read with a favoring eye this writing, and cheer us with a liberal but also with a happy hand, knowing that all that ye give to this cause, for the good of God's Church, from sincere love to Jesus, shall again be rewarded by Him from whom all blessings flow. "The Lord establish the work of our hands, yea, the work of our hands, establish that. Amen!"

"This is the desire of us, the subscribers: B. Verbryck, Abraham DuBois, Sr., Abr. DuBois, Jr., Joh. De Mott, Laurens De Mott, Willem Post, Jan Dorlant, Cornelis Van Arsdalen, Jacobus Nevius, Pieter Van Dyck, Pieter Montfoort, Jan Montfoort, Lucas Nevius, Dirk Low, Elbert Stoothoc, Adriaen Hegeman, Jochim Gulick, Jacobus Gulick, Joh. Brower.

"We, the undersigned, promise for the building of a church, in accordance with the three accompanying articles, to pay the respective sums standing against our name:

Note:—Omitting the sums, which range from one to ten pounds, the names are the following:

"Joh. Frielinghuysen, Bern Verbryck, Abrah. Du Bois, Sr., Abr. Du Bois, Jr., Willem Post, Joh. De Mott, Pieter Middag, Corn. Van Arsdalen, Corn. Wyckoff, Jan Dorlandt, Pieter Van Dyck, Lucas Nevius, Laur. De Mott, Pieter Montfoort, Jacobus Nevius, Rem Van Der Beek, Jan Montfoort, Dirk Low, George Hall, Jr., Elbert Stoothoff, Henry Hall, Pieter De Milmer, Jacobus Gulick, Henry Stevens, Ariaen Hegeman, Abraham Terbosch, Joh. Brouwer, Marte Hogelant, Samuel Tilton."

The foregoing petition was considered by the Noortbrensch consistory at Neschenick as the following minutes show:

"Neschenick, the 25th of August, 1752, the Consistory of Noortbrensch was convened there and, after the opening prayers, there was shown to the consistory the desire of several of their far-distant members and adherents to have established there a church, so as to have a better opportunity of attending the services of the Gospel, and thereto request that then a Consistory should be chosen and ordained, and that according to certain Articles of which above (mentioned above). And it was then desired that as members of the church of Noortbrensch, there should be given over for the establishment of that of Neschenick:

"Bernard Verbryck and his wife, Abraham Du Bois, Sr., Abraham Du Bois, Jr., Albert Lou and his wife, Cornelius Lou, Joh. De Mott and his wife, Jan Montfoort and his wife, J. Nevius, besides several catechumens, the which is permitted by the Hon. Consistory upon condition that, according to the promise and custom, they adhere to the present call upon Dominie Frielinghuysen.

Thereupon, the consistory proceeded to the election: For Elders—Bernardus Verbryck, Abraham Dubois; Deacons—Johannes De Mott, Cornelius Low."

On the 11th of October succeeding, it is recorded that the site of the church was determined to be "on the Amwell Road, between the residences of Lawrence and John De Mott, on the knoll on the North side of said road."

That the Rev. Frelinghuysen was not averse to this establishment of a new church but rather fostered the idea is proved by the fact that he himself subscribed three pounds and ten shillings toward the erection of a church building. Whether any kind of a temporary building was put up in these first few years of the church's life, I have not ascertained, but I doubt it, for the work on the present stone structure was begun in 1759, only seven years after the church's organization.

Rev. John Frelinghuysen passed away September 15, 1754, on Long Island on his way to Coetus. He had reached the age of only 27, but if life is to be measured "not by its span but by its use," the young man's rewards in Heaven are great. He left one son, Frederick, who grew up to be eloquent at the bar, valiant on Revolutionary battlefields, and wise in the councils of the new born nation. It is rather singular that not one of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen's sons remained alive ten years after his death and that only one of these, John, Neshanic's first pastor, left a descendant. But this descendant was the progenitor of a long generation of Frelinghuysens, several of whom have been illustrious in State and Nation.

Dominie Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh—1758-1761

For four years after Frelinghuysen's death, the church remained vacant until 1758, when the Rev. Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh was installed as minister of the combined churches of Raritan, Bedminster, North Branch (now Readington), Millstone (now Harlingen), and Neshanic. The register of baptisms commences during Hardenbergh's pastorate on May 23, 1760, with the names of Jan and Sarah Wycoff, who presented a daughter, Neeltjie, Jacobus and Elizabeth Hegeman, who presented a son, Pieter, and Daniel and Catlyntie Hunt, who presented their daughter, Catlyntie. The register is complete and has been continued to the present day.

Late in 1759, the people set to work with a will to build the present stone structure in which the congregation still worships. Fortunately, we have had handed down to us most interesting records of the construction of the splendid edifice in which the Neshanic congregation has worshipped continually for one hundred forty-five years.

The deed of land for the church was given March 1st, 1760, and is displayed, framed, on the walls of the church. After the usual introduction, it witnesseth:—"that the said John De Mott and Lawrence De Mott for and in consideration of the sum of Ten shillins current money of the Province aforesaid to them in hand well and truly paid and satisfied, by the said Rem Van Derbeek,

Bardenardus Van Bryck, John Monford and Dirck Low, at or before the insealing and delivering of these presents and for Divers other reasonable and valuable considerations them thereunto moving, hath granted, bargained, sold, aliened, enfeeofed, released, assured, and confirmed, and by these presents do for themselves and their heirs, grant, bargain, sell, alien, enfeeof, release, assure, and confirm unto the aforesaid Rem Van Derbeek, Bardenardus Van Bryk, John Monford, and Dirck Low, Trustees Apoynted their successors and assigns forever, All that a certain Messuage or Tennement or peice of Ground being part of their own plantations, and which being for the use of God and Building of a Dutch Church, and hath its beginnig at a stake planted in a line between said Lawrence De Mott and George Brokaw, etc., etc."

The records of the construction of the building are preserved for us in the form of two old account books, yellow with age and worn with much handling. The one is labeled:—

"Annoq 1759 Oct. 16

Dirck Low his Book

The account book of the Kark built at New Channak." and the other simply: "Account Book of John De Mott," but scribbled on the outside cover of De Mott's book are the words, "King George the Third, anno domminy, 1764."

The collection of money took place chiefly in 1760, 1761, and 1762. There were a few payments in 1763. Then came a lull until 1770, with a vigorous drive in 1771 and '72, finishing near the end of the latter year.

Not only did the two gentlemen collect money but they also kept a record of contributions of labor upon the Neshanic Church. Some labor was paid for, other laborers who donated their work were given credit for it in cash figures. I shall quote a few items from the account books to give the reader a glimpse into the unusual nature of these books and an idea of their fascinating interest:

First item in "The Accounts of the Laboures that Labored to the Kark at New Channink"

December 31, 1759 ,Dirck Low to Hawling of Stone a part of a Day £0 s5 d0

Sept. 19, 1761 To Diging of the Middel Trance a part of a Day s2

October 21, 1761 To Hawling of a Load of Oke Bords s6

" " " To Hawling Sand, klay & water and other nasarise 1 Day & a Half at 6/0 per Day s9

(Leaving out most of the names, dates, and the sums set down, we have the following interesting items):

To Skoring of Timber 4 Days at 3/0 per Day
 To Braking of Stone a Part of a Day with Towhands
 To Hawling of a Lode of Shingals
 To Hawling of a Lode of Winder Schantlings
 To 3 gallants and a half of Rum at 6/0 per gallant
 To 4 gallants of Rum at 6/0 per ga.
 To Paul Petew for 2 Galland of Linciet Oyl at 10/0 per ga.
 To dito for one Earthen Gug
 To Joship Dinnis for one pound of glew s 2 d 5
 To Dirck Low for one pound of candils s 1
 To Emans Hogeland & Hennery Wile for plastering & tending
 Themselves and finding themSelves in Board and pointing Som
 part of the wall
 To Ephrom Carl Dirck Low Ditor
 for his printis (apprentice) 5 Days at 3/6 per Day
 To Peter Scheanck for 10 Gallons of Rum the sum of s 12 d 6
 To Peter Scheanck for 3 Emtý Bottels the sum of s 1 d 9
 Note: We are just a little afraid that these "Emtý Bottels" did
 not remain "Emtý."

In Johannis De Mott's account book, dated Nov. 10th, 1772,
 we have "A list of the names that have paid money to build the
 kerk at Neschanneck."

Among them are the names of Rev. J. R. Hardenbergh, who
 contributed 5 pounds and Rev. Johannis Martienes Van Harlingen,
 who gave 15. Van Harlingen's gift was exceeded only by that of
 Jurian Van Rypen, who donated £17 s11 d6. Names that are still
 to be found in the Neshanic congregation are Brokaw, Allegard,
 Carl, Hoc, Lake, Lane, Sebring, Sutphin, Van Dorn, Van Nuis,
 Wyckoff, Hegeman, Schenck, Staats, Herder, Stryker, Van Cleaf,
 Amerman, Witekneght (Whitenack), Vect (Veghte?), Ryneerse,
 Quick, Van Der Vear, Guylick, Hogelant, Van Fleet, Bergen.
 "Jostcos show" would now be Jost Kershaw, so radically have
 many of the names changed. At the end of the list, we have
 "Cornieles Low: sumerset."

There follows under the same date, "A list of the Names who
 have paid money to buyld the kerk at Neshanneck and also those
 that have a right in it by my book in where I have kep A true
 account to the Best of my knowledge is as followeth": List of
 names follow.

Next we have "A list of the Names that have laboured at
 building the kerk at Neshanneck wich was begun in the year one
 thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine and was finished in Decmber
 in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two is as
 followeth their names & sums": Lists and sums follow.

As we study the accounts of these two men, we are reminded of the words in Holy Writ: "And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had oversight of the house of the Lord: and they laid it out to carpenters and builders that wrought upon the house of the Lord, and to masons and to hewers of stone. . . . Moreover they reckoned not with the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen; for they dealt faithfully." (II Kings 12:11-12, 15.)

There is very little to be learned from the old records of the Neshanic Church concerning the ministry of Hardenbergh here. I can find but two minutes of consistory in which his name is mentioned. But we do know that it was during his service here that the building of the church was begun.

Rev. J. R. Hardenbergh was born at Rosendale, N. Y., Ulster County, in 1736. He first studied at Kingston Academy and then studied theology under Rev. John Frelinghuysen. When Frelinghuysen died at the early age of 27, Hardenbergh was 18 years old. Young Hardenbergh must early have shown much talent and ability for we find that John Frelinghuysen's congregations decided soon after his death that they would call Hardenbergh as soon as he should become ordained. In the meantime, Frelinghuysen's widow decided that she would return to her own people in Holland. The day was set when she should embark for Holland with her two small children. But young Hardenbergh, then scarcely nineteen, had fallen in love with Mrs. Frelinghuysen and, alarmed at the prospect of the early departure of the object of his affections, on the day before she was to embark, he suddenly surprised the widow of less than a year with a proposal of marriage. In her astonishment, she is said to have cried out, "My child, what are you thinking about?" She was perhaps more amused than indignant at the youth's audacity. She went on with her packing and her "Farewells." But, the next day, as she was about to leave for the sloop that was to carry her down the Raritan to the seaboard, a most violent storm arose, so wild that for the nonce she was compelled to abandon all thought of sailing. It was some time before another ship was ready to sail for Holland and, influenced, undoubtedly, by the attractiveness of young Hardenbergh and the seemingly Providential intervention of the storm, Jufvrouw Frelinghuysen did a little serious thinking herself, even though she herself was no longer a child and, to quote Rev. Wm. Demarest, her biographer: "The vista down which she directed her view became altogether changed. Her bewilderment respecting the divine dealing with her gave way to the delightful apprehension of a purpose on the part

of her Heavevly Father * * * and the consummation of the conjugal union lay as a definite thing in the future."

Hardenbergh himself has been described as a patriot, statesman, a man of faith. He served the five associated churches until 1761, when he journeyed to Holland principally, we are told, to bring back to this country his widowed mother-in-law. He could not have been in a great hurry to bring her back for he tarried across the Atlantic at least two years. While in the Netherlands, he did a good work in reconciling the differences between the progressive wing of the Reformed Church group in America who favored independence from the church in the Netherlands, and the hide-bound reactionaries who thought nothing good could originate in such a new colony as America. He also began to gather the moneys that had been promised in Holland to Rev. Frelinghuysen for the erection of an academy in New Jersey. He was the first minister ordained in America to visit Holland.

Hardenbergh's labors for a higher education in New Jersey soon bore fruit after his expedition across the sea. In 1766, George III granted a charter to Queen's College in answer to his "loving" subjects of the Church in the Netherlands. Hardenbergh later was unanimously chosen the first President of the college, and Frederick Frelinghuysen, son of John, became the first tutor.

During the Revolutionary War, Hardenbergh was zealous for the cause of Independence. He was a delegate to the Provincial Congress of New Jersey which was convened at Burlington, June 10, 1776. This was the congress which issued the Declaration of Independence and, on the succeeding day, adopted a Constitution for the State. Because he lived in the thick of Tory neighbors, his life was frequently in danger and he often slept with a loaded musket by the side of his bed.

He died in 1790 at the age of fifty, another life cut off in its prime. But he had lived much in the half century given him here. His last words were, "I am going to cast my crown before the throne. Now I shall go to rest, for I shall go to be with the Lord. Hosanno."

Dr. Messler, in his history, attributes a large measure of Hardenbergh's success to his wife. We are willing to admit the remarkable character and abilities of Mrs. Hardenbergh, but we do not desire to detract from those of Hardenbergh himself. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Hardenbergh added to her husband's strength and usefulness, but we believe he would have been a great man had he never met his wife. The marvel is that, with such a wonderful wife, he managed to outshine her.

On four different occasions, he was elected President of General Synod, and was long regarded as second only to Dr. Livingston in the roster of the Reformed Church ministers of his time.

Dominie Johannes Martinus Van Harlingen—1762-1795

As has already been mentioned, Hardenbergh started for Holland in 1761, and remained there about two years. Histories have it that while he was gone, the Neshanic and Millstone (Harlingen) churches became dissatisfied with his long absence and therefore called Rev. Van Harlingen. Now I do not like to dispute history, but I find the following minutes written in the Dutch language, which I shall take the trouble to translate and then ask the historians to explain:

"Mar. 2nd, 1761. The Consistory of the associated churches of Nushenick and Millston met at the home of Johannis De Mott. Dominie Hardenbergh led in prayer and the call upon Mr. Johannis Martinus Van Harlingen was consummated. The meeting was closed with prayer. Done in the presence of the consistory:—Elders Simon Van Aarsdalen, Gerret Jan Van Aarsdalen, Rem Van Derbeek, B. Bryck. Deacons: Douwe Dittmas, Hendrik Kenneda, Abraham Stryker, Jan Montfoort, Louwerence De Mott."

According to Corwin's Manual (1922), Van Harlingen was licensed by the Classis of Amsterdam, at the completion of his theological studies in the Netherlands, April 6, 1761, and ordained by the same Classis May 4, 1761. The young man must have been called before he was licensed to preach, something odd for those days, if not for ours. It is possible that Hardenbergh took the documentary call, or the assurance of his having been called, over to Van Harlingen in Amsterdam, but that the young man saw fit not to settle in these two churches until the year 1762. The Neshanic Church was then in process of building. We have already seen that Van Harlingen gave fifteen pounds toward the construction of the church, whereas Hardenbergh gave but five. It cannot be that Hardenbergh was poor in this world's goods for his father had inherited a large share of the "Hardenbergh Patent" which comprised all of Sullivan and a part of Delaware County, New York, and Mrs. Hardenbergh was the daughter of a wealthy East India merchant of Amsterdam. Comparing his fifteen pounds with Hardenbergh's five, Van Harlingen certainly commends himself to us as a man of liberality and generosity.

Rev. Van Harlingen was born near Millstone, in 1724. He studied theology in Holland and, after locating in Neshanic and Harlingen in 1761 or 1762, remained in this double charge for the

remainder of his life. He died in 1795, universally beloved and lamented. "He preached exclusively in Dutch until near the close of his life, when upon the insistent demand of the younger folk, he preached occasionally in English. He was an evangelical pastor and a patron of learning. He was a member of the original board of trustees of Queen's College and labored industriously for its first endowment. The fact that Harlingen Church is called after his name is a decisive proof of the estimation in which he was universally held. The following inscription is on the tombstone in the Belle Mead Cemetery, where this faithful pastor lies interred:

"Van Harlingen, recalled by Zion's King,
Finished in haste his embassy abroad;
Then soaring up to Heaven on seraph's wings
Blest angels hailed the ambassador of God."

Dominie Solomon Froeligh—1780-1786

In 1780, in order to obtain more preaching, since Van Harlingen was serving two churches, Neshanic united with the Millstone Church (generally referred to in church records as the Hillsboro Church) to obtain part of the services of Dominie Solomon Froeligh. The call upon Rev. Froeligh stands in the names of the two churches, Millstone and Neshanic, and is dated Sept. 4, 1780. He was to preach two Sundays out of three at Millstone and one at Neshanic and was to alternate between Dutch and English. At Neshanic, when the days were long, he was to preach twice a day. Millstone was to furnish 160 bushels of good winter wheat and Neshanic 108.

For six years, Froeligh served Millstone and Neshanic and then took charge of the united congregations of Hackensack and Schraalenberg, where he labored until he died Oct. 8th, 1827, just **one hundred** years ago, almost to the day. Writing in his old age, nearly forty years after he left Somerset County, Froeligh says in a letter to a friend: "While preaching at Millstone and Neshanic, I experienced God's smiles and frowns. Here I have been both on the mount and in the valley. I had officiated but a short time in these congregations, when, to my great joy, a general awakening broke out among the people. It affected persons of every age and color. The word preached became powerful; many became solicitous inquirers what they should do to be saved; many of profligate morals became professing and praying Christians. This unexpected season filled my heart with great delight as I had begun to despair that God would ever own me by His blessings on my labors. But alas! I was too much elated. I imputed too much to my own

abilities and did not give God the glory. Therefore my joy was turned into sorrow. I was seized with a most dangerous illness and brought to the gates of death. But it pleased the Lord to restore me. But soon after, he gave me up to the most gloomy despair in which I continued for six years. My situation was frequently rendered intolerable by sudden injections of Satan's fiery darts. The arch-fiend so far succeeded that I thought I could not preach and actually desisted for several weeks; but it pleased the Lord to show me that it was a delusion and I again betook myself to my work. The Lord was pleased to deliver me out of this horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; since which I have enjoyed considerable peace and tranquility of mind."

With his life subsequent to his departure from this charge we have little to do in a history of this kind. He had been a great fighter for the independence of the colonies during the Revolution, and, when the British entered Long Island, he was forced to flee from his congregations there, escaping by the skin of his teeth. When peace came, it seems he could not stand peace so he turned his fighting qualities to church matters. He made a fight for certain hazy points of church doctrine, virtually exalting doctrine above practical religion. He was a "trouble-maker in Israel," leading in what has been termed, "The Hackensack Insurrection," he and four other ministers who had been suspended for contumacy establishing what they called, "The True Reformed Church." This was in 1822, when Froeligh was seventy-two years old. The new sect grew until 1830, when it counted thirty congregations. It gradually petered out and our latest information is that there are five congregations left. A number of Holland Dutch churches which seceded from the Reformed Church in America and have arrogated to themselves the name of "Christian Reformed," have made much of the life and preachings of our former pastor. The most charitable view we can take is that Solomon Froeligh meant well, but was led astray by some hair-brained, rebellious young hot-heads who knew that unless they tied their machinations to the coat-tails of a man of some influence and prominence, their movement would soon fall to the ground. It is a rather noteworthy commentary on the history of the "True Reformed Church" that almost immediately after Froeligh died, its decline began.

The Minutes of the Early Pastorates

The minutes of these early pastorates from Frelinghuysen to the close of Van Harlingen's ministry are nearly all in the Dutch language and have been recorded in such disjointed fashion that it is hard to arrive at any satisfactory sequence.

We note that in 1763 the consistories of Noort brens and Nieuw Schennick got together to set the line that should divide their spheres of influence so that all who lived "to the South of said line should belong to Dominie Van Harlingen and all who lived to the North shall belong to Dominie Hardenbergh." Note: Hardenbergh, of course, was still at North Branch (Readington).

On Nov. 24, 1769, a petition was presented to the Honorable Consistory begging "That in certain cases, there might be English services." The consistory took the matter into "serious consideration," but it was finally decided that "the petition could not be granted without conflicting with the deed of the church." "The Honorable Consistory does not find that she has right or might to change the basis upon which the church was established. Meanwhile, we shall use all proper means to give the brethren all satisfaction in their demands, preserving the original right of the foundation basis of the church."

On Jan. 30, 1775, the charter of the church was read to the consistory and Captain W. Verbryk and Dominie Van Harlingen were appointed a committee to present the charter to His Excellency, the Governor.

The first minutes in the English language are dated Nov. 4, 1780. This was the year Froeligh arrived on the scene. Froeligh's handwriting is in a beautiful Dutch. The English minutes must have been written by some Elder or Deacon.

The first record of a church trial is under date of Jan. 7, 1782. One man had called another a scoundrel and a scamp and forbade him to set foot on his yard. The other, in his turn, had called to first a "sorehead." Both were found guilty and advised to admit their guilt. Both refused. Another meeting of the consistory was called. And as so often happens with serial stories, we can find no record of how the affair eventuated. We suppose the two are now at peace in mansions of glory.

On October 17, 1783, the Neshanic consistory refused to receive into their communion on confession of faith Miss Gertie York "on the grounds that she lived in the confines of a neighboring congregation." Would that all consistories these days were as considerate of one another's churches.

Rev. William Richmond Smith—1794-1820

Smith was pastor with Van Harlingen 1794-1795, alone 1795-1798, with H. Polhemus 1799-1808, with P. Labagh 1808-1820.

A year before Van Harlingen died, Neshanic and Harlingen, feeling the necessity of having preaching in the English language for the benefit of the junior members of the congregation, called the Rev. William R. Smith. He was to preach two Sabbaths at Neshanic and one at Harlingen and was thus more closely identified with the former than with the latter. He also made his residence within the bounds of the congregation, living near Flagtown on the parsonage farm there. His long ministry, continuing in activity until 1817 and terminated only by his death in 1820 was blest by a steady growth in the church and an elevation of the standard of piety in the whole community.

Rev. Smith was born at Pequea, Pa., May 10th, 1752, his birth anteceding the founding of the Neshanic Church by exactly two months and a half. He was descended from distinguished and pious parentage. His two brothers became Presidents of such colleges as the College of New Jersey now Princeton, and Union College at Schenectady. He was licensed to preach the gospel in 1780 and accepted a call to a church in Wilmington, Del., where he labored for fifteen years, beloved and respected by all. During his ministry at Wilmington, his health became greatly impaired and he sought relief in a voyage across the Atlantic, visiting Ireland, the home of his ancestors and the principal cities of England. He returned in less than a year but his health did not improve. He therefore sought a different type of charge and was providentially led to Neshanic and Harlingen. For twenty-six years, he lived at Neshanic, a courteous, gentlemanly man. Dr. Gabriel Ludlow said of him: "He visited his people faithfully and regularly as a pastor, going through his congregation or parish in a year and a half, yearly, and every year, so long as he was able not passing by a single family." In 1815, he was suddenly stricken one Sunday in the pulpit with a paralytic stroke and he was never able to preach again. Five years later, he died and his funeral was attended by a large concourse of people eager to testify to the veneration in which they held so faithful a pastor and friend. Rev. Peter Labagh, his colleague preached the funeral sermon, the manuscript copy of which is owned by Mrs. Wm. Neary of Neshanic, a great-great granddaughter of Rev. Smith.

That manuscript copy lies before the writer of these lines. We find that the text is 2 Timothy 4:7, 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all them that love his appearing." The principal points of his discourse were, 1. A review of the apostles life, with reference to the varied experiences of the gospel minister; 2. The prospect to which the apostle looked forward, and to which the faithful minister may now look forward, in the world to come. Toward the close, he says of Smith, "Not many hours before his departure, I visited him. He was calm, resigned, happy. His conflict with his spiritual adversaries appeared to be over and he was waiting for his crown. He is gone to rest. We shall see him no more till these heavens and this earth shall have passed away. Farewell, affectionate colleague, faithful shepherd, afflicted saint, farewell. Thine active spirit has left its prison of clay and found a resting place in the Paradise of God."

His remains were laid to rest in the cemetery at Flagtown. On the tablet which stands at the head of his grave, you may read, "Sacred to the memory of William Smith, for twenty-five years one of the ministers of the united congregations of Shannock and Harlingen. He died February 23d, 1820 in the sixty-eighth year of his age. The memory of the just is blessed." His wife, who died in 1840, lies buried beside him.

Henry Polhemus—1798-1808

Van Harlingen had died in 1795. For three years thereafter, Rev. Smith had conducted the work of his extensive double charge alone. It was too much for one man. A transcription of the minutes of Nov. 9, 1798, which are written in the good, clear hand of Rev. Smith, is as follows:

"The Consistory of the low Dutch Reformed Church at Shannack, met, agreeably to appointment, at the house of Hermanus Hoogland, Jr., and the meeting was called to order by the Preses.

"It having been represented by delegates of Sourland Church that they are desirous of having Public Worship more frequently performed amongst them, and that in order to this end, it is their wish that the Consistory of Shannack will agree to one or other of the following propositions: 1st. That the Church in Shannack will join them in giving a call to

Mr. Polhemus, or: 2nd, Allow them one half of Mr. Smith's ministerial labors, or: 3rd, That they will consent to dissolution of the union of Shannack and Sourland congregations.

"The Consistory agreed to the first of those propositions, provided, the people of Shannack are willing to support them in calling Mr. Polhemus.

Concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.

BY THE PRESES."

We read between the lines a sort of an ultimatum. Sourland was getting more sour than ever because it had divine worship only one Sunday out of three. If they could not do better than that in the union, they would break away and call a man of their own.

The people of Neshanic were agreeable to the new arrangement for we read that on Feb. 14th, 1799, the two consistories "signed a call for Mr. Henry Polhemus as the Stated Minister of said churches." The Consistory of the Church of Sourland agreed to allow Mr. Polhemus the use of their parsonage and the sum of twenty-two pounds, ten shillings; and the Consistory of Neshanic the sum of fifty pounds per annum."

Living as he did at the Sourland parsonage, Polhemus was far more closely connected with the Sourland Church than with Neshanic. We hardly ever run across his name in the minutes of the Neshanic Church but in those of July 5th, 1808, we read that he had informed the Consistory on the preceding Sabbath that he had notified the Harlingen Consistory that at the next meeting of Classis he would apply for a dissolution of the pastoral relation between himself and the two churches. "And, also, that for certain reasons, he should decline, in future, preaching at Harlingen; but that he would preach at Shannack as usual until the dissolution of the pastoral relation, if the Consistory at Shannack were agreed." The Consistory agreed to his preaching in his turn as aforesaid and "that they will give him what money they can collect for his services." Polhemus appears to have gotten along better at Neshanic than at Harlingen. He was born at Harlingen and we have the words of Christ that "a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house."

Seven years after his departure from Harlingen and Shannack, this good man died of typhoid fever at the early age of but forty-three. His last charge was at Shawangunk, N. Y., where a remarkable revival occurred during his ministry. The Shawangunk Church is an old stone church very similar

to that at Neshanic. A fine painting of the church as it must have appeared in the days of Polhemus may be seen in Hertzog Hall at New Brunswick. The writer has often visited this ancient church, nestling in the shadow of the beautiful Shawangunk Range, where "that dear Dominie Polhemus" spent his last years of loyal and loving service.

Rev. Peter Labagh, D.D.—1809-1821

Polhemus's place had to be filled. The Harlingen Church wanted to call a son of Solomon Froeligh, the Rev. Peter D. Froeligh, then located at New Paltz and New Hurley, N. Y. A congregational meeting was called at Neshanic to see whether the people of Shannack Church would concur. A vote was taken and it was found that only three favored concurring. After some discussion back and forth, it was agreed to hear candidates. The result was that in due season a call was made out to Rev. Peter Labagh and he became associated with Rev. Smith as co-pastor until Smith's death and remained in this double charge another year thereafter, resigning in 1821 at Neshanic in order to serve Harlingen alone. For another twenty-three years, he served Harlingen. He preached his farewell sermon at Harlingen on Nov. 10, 1844, the day he entered his seventy-second year. His resignation, according to Dr. Gabriel Ludlow, "was not owing to any decay of his faculties, but to a failure of voice, which rendered much of what he said inaudible to his congregation." In Todd's "Memoir of the Rev. Peter Labagh, D. D." we read, "The old soldier of the Cross had followed his Captain through years of conflict and struggle. From many a well-fought field he had borne away the trophies of victory and laid them at his Master's feet. And now, covered with the dust of the march and of the battle, and gray with half a century of service, the Master gave him permission to retire from the field, till he should call him up to occupy a throne, and wear a crown of glory in the heavens." He and his wife took up their residence with their son-in-law and daughter at the old Van Derveer homestead about equidistant from Harlingen, Griggstown, and Rock Hill, and in this beautiful retreat, loved by his family and revered by the whole countryside, he spent the remainder of his days.

Those of us who attended the Two Hundredth Anniversary Exercises of the Harlingen Church on May 18th of the current year will recollect that, when the pastor of the church asked whether there were any present that day who could recall Dominie Labagh, Mr. S. D. Opie, one of the oldest mem-

bers of the Neshanic Church arose in his place and narrated how, when he was but a small boy, he was playing one day at the old Van Derveer homestead with the grandson of Dr. Labagh. In a game of hide-and-seek, he hid himself under a large bush directly under a long, old-fashioned window at which the old Doctor was sitting. He had not seen the Doctor but noticing the flowers on the bush, he picked one off, with the result that there suddenly burst upon his little ears the thundering words from old Dominie Labagh, "Thou shalt not steal." Young Opie fled to his companion, the grandson, who reassured him by saying, "Never mind him."

That young Opie did mind the old Dominie is proved by the fact that later the Neshanic church elected him treasurer which office he ably filled for a long period of years.

Mr. Christopher B. Gano, the oldest member of the Neshanic Church, now in his ninety-fifth year, tells of how, when he was a young man, he acted as best man at the wedding of his brother at which Dominie Labagh was the officiating clergyman. It was the custom in those days for the bride and groom to stand together and for the best man and the bride's-maid to stand together a little off to one side. Doctor Labagh had by that time retired from the active ministry and was pretty well along in years. He read along in the marriage form and then, turning to the best man and the bride's-maid, he asked Mr. Gano, the best man. "Dost thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?" The bride's-maid nearly sank through the floor.

Dr. Labagh was one of the ablest divines who ever served the Neshanic Church. His life and work are well described in the 'Memoir' from which we have quoted above. It is interesting from a Neshanic Church viewpoint, to note that Peter Labagh was received into the communion of the Hackensack Church by Dominie Solomon Froeligh and took a course in theology under his direction.

Labagh was a most active man. So wonderfully did Harlingen flourish during his ministry there that two churches grew out of her communion, the Blawenburg Church, established in 1832 and the Griggstown Church organized in 1842. Labagh emphasized Sunday School work and at the close of his ministry, five Sunday Schools with an enrollment of about 250 scholars were firmly established in five centers within the congregation. He was an untiring worker and, when he knew his cause was just, he fought for it, let come what would.

Doctor Ludlow, in his funeral address, in the manner of that time, calls attention, not only to Labagh's powers but also to his weaknesses, as he, Ludlow, saw them. After asserting that few excelled Labagh in unpremeditated speech, in retort, and in repartee, he avers that this was Labagh's weakness, that he depended too much on his ready, native talents. Ludlow goes on to say, "he could not be called a diligent, close, methodical, persevering student, and, hence, he stood below many men of his day whose native powers would not for a moment bear comparison with his." We are afraid that Dr. Ludlow was trying to cut Labagh's cloth according to his own pattern. As we review Labagh's life and work, and note how he built up the Harlingen Church, how he organized two new churches and a number of Sunday Schools, how he mingled daily with his fellow mortals, raised a family, took a leading part in denominational and educational affairs, we wonder that he had any time left to do the studying he did do. And that he did do a good deal of studying, several of his sermons and addresses which have been preserved for us amply testify. There lies within reach of the writer's hand the manuscript copy of Labagh's installation sermon preached at Harlingen October 8, 1809. A careful perusal of this manuscript will convince any unbiased person that Dr. Labagh could produce a good sermon whenever he had the time and opportunity. Because of his strenuous labors in other directions, Labagh may not always have been at top-notch in the pulpit. But as Rev. Todd so aptly remarks in his "Memoir," "It would have been a down dereliction of duty if he had turned aside from the work of re-construction to which the providence of God called him, and given up his time, however pleasant it might have been to himself, to the pursuits of theological and various learning."

The Church Minutes from the Beginning of Smith's Ministry to the End of Labagh's

An examination of the minutes of the church dating from the beginning of Smith's ministry in 1794 to the end of Labagh's in 1821, all of which time Smith was pastor except for the last year, brings to light many interesting and often amusing incidents.

In 1796 a church seal was adopted, inscribed, "Seal of the Reformed Dutch Church of Shannick." The seal now lies in the church safe and may be read by all those who have the combination to the safe.

In 1797, a singing society petitioned the consistory to appoint one or more persons to unite with the petitioners "as a committee to adopt a certain set of tunes suitable to the different metres of the Low Dutch Psalmbook and proper to be sung in church."

It would seem that every piece of gossip, every neighborhood squabble, every difference of any kind was brought before the consistory. The consistory was a species of police court trying all manner of crimes and misdemeanors and the usual sentence meted out to the guilty was "suspension from the church's special privileges until such time as they would exhibit signs of repentance." In the six years from 1797 to 1803, we find six such trials narrated in great detail. Under Sept. 14, 1797, we read, "Nicholas W. appeared and exhibited a charge against Myndart X. for having accused him of raising and circulating a false report of him, viz: that Myndart X. should have said that Peter Y. told him Mr. Smith preached false doctrine and he would not stop to "say it in his face." I have turned this charge about in several different ways and yet do not know exactly what was being charged. Something like, "He said that you said that I said that you said that he said that so-and-so told so-and-so that you said that I said so-and-so."

Other trials follow, A. vs. B., for accusing his wife or cursing and swearing, C. vs. D. for "great abuse with tongue and hands." Another is a row about two bushels of rye. A man "approached to the Lord's Supper when under suspension." His "guilt is so atrocious that he is suspended for one year." Another is suspended for having imbibed "too much liquor."

In 1803 a congregational meeting was called to know "whether in their opinion this church ought to be repaired, and if repaired, whether the roof be continued in its present form or be altered to a square roof, and with a belfry or without." "The congregation agreed that it be repaired in its present form as to roof and without a belfry."

Rev. Gabriel Ludlow, D.D.—1821-1878

We finally come upon these two notations in the old church minute-book, "August 9th, 1821. The Rev'd Gabel came in the congregation of Shannack to begin his ministerial labours.

"September 5th, 1821. The Rev'd Gabriel Ludlow was ordained in the gosple Ministry, and set apart to be the pastor in the church at Shannack." ✓

With these two short items, begins a record of two ministries lasting for over One Hundred Years, a record the life of which, I do not suppose, has been duplicated in any other church in our land. But we must not run ahead of our story.

Dr. Ludlow was born at Aquackanonck, N. J., in 1797, graduated from Union College in 1817 and the New Brunswick Seminary in 1820. Neshanic was his first and only charge. He was ordained here. He died here—in 1878. He was an active pastor until 1875, when Rev. John Hart was called to be associated with him. Dr. Ludlow refused to become Pastor Emeritus, an excusable notion on his part. The congregation and Rev. Hart very graciously humored him in what was, after fifty-four years of active service in his one and only field, a perfectly legitimate whim.

As a young man of twenty-four, Ludlow entered upon the "trials" as well as encouragements of his first charge at what, in his first minutes, he spells "New Shannack". For a short breathing space of time, the people of the congregation, enamoured, no doubt, by the charm and personality of the fine, upstanding, intellectual, young minister, forgot about bringing their differences and imaginary differences before the consistory but the "trials" of the young man soon began. After a couple preliminary skirmishes, a real battle begins. A woman accuses a man of having taken "a pig three days old". This is the way the accusation is made: "Mrs. Rebecca S. declared, upon the faith and credibility of a Christian, that at a certain time, they lost a pig of three days old, which was after a considerable time found at Teunis V.'s, confined. She does not pretend to say who took the pig." As corroborating testimony, another young lady declared that the sons of Teunis "took a half-bushel of water-melons out of her father's patch on a Sunday without leave."

A few months later, an Elder is accused by a certain man of having "attempted to defraud him of a back dower due him in consequence of his marriage to the Widow Van F., the Elder's Mother-in-law."

Again, a woman is "in the practice of using profane and abusive language to her husband and of quarreling and fighting with him." This last case is dated October 11th, 1827, just a hundred years ago this month. Oh, Ludlow, your "trials" amuse us now, after the waves and the billows of a hundred years have gone over them, but they were real trials to you, and your successor of a hundred years after, amidst his chuckles, breathes a sigh of relief that although he walks

where you walked, he doesn't have to walk in your shoes.

In 1822, a certain J. S. "made a demand of eight dollars for making a coffin for M. H., dec'd., one of the poor members of this church." In the same minutes, we find, "Resolved, that the Treasurer be ordered to pay Rev. P. Labagh for the tablet purchased by him for this church." Where is the tablet?

In March of 1827(a farm and a parsonage for Rev. Ludlow was purchased for \$3500.00. In 1830, the school district was given permission to build on the church grounds. Sixty acres of the parsonage farm was sold for \$1,000.00. August 13, 1831, it was resolved, "that the Rev. Gabriel Ludlow be exonerated from paying rent for the parsonage on condition that he obligate himself to keep the same in repair at his own expense." They must have paid munificent salaries in those days. In the year 1832, ninety-five years ago, an addition of fifteen feet was built onto the church. This was so neatly done that, unless one has been informed, one cannot tell where the old wall ends and the new,—the less old, rather,—begins.

Skipping over to 1850, we find nineteen members are dismissed" for the purpose of being organized into a church at Branchville." Branchville is now South Branch. In 1852 the church took out an insurance for \$5,000.00 in the Hillsboro Mutual Association. The church, that year, was one hundred years old, but we can discover no record of any anniversary celebration. The church was not yet old enough, perhaps. In 1852, Ludlow spells the name New Shannick. We are getting closer to home.

In '53, the parsonage property is sold for \$2,400.00 and a new property bought for \$1,550.00. The new propety is what is now known as the "old parsonage," the residence of Elder William Van Fleet.

In 1871, they did have an anniversary, the fiftieth anniversary of Ludlow's ordination. The morning of September 5th was bright and mild and the ancient church adorned and beautified, appropriately decorated for the occasion. The consistory had charge of the arrangements. Long before the program of the day began, the church was packed to the doors. A large number of ministers of varying denominations were on hand and many former parishioners had traveled long distances to be there. Rev. John Gardner of Harlingen presided. Such distinguished divines as Steele of New Brunswick, Mesick of Somerville, Doolittle of Stanton, Rodgers of Bound Brook and Messler of Somerville took part in the exercises and the Anniversary Sermon was preached by Dr,

Ludlow himself, who took as his text, Psalm 28::7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusteth in Him and I am helped. Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth and with my song will I praise Him." Among other things, Dr. Ludlow remarked, "I may say with truth that I have not the slightest regret that I have spent my whole ministry in this church and congregation, neither have I any reason to believe that I should have been either happier, or, what is a much higher consideration, more useful in any other situation. Some speak of larger fields of labor as desirable. I have had a field sufficiently large to take my whole strength, and therefore there was no need for me to seek a larger one." "It may be said, with truth, that the term of time between 1821 and 1871 has been one of the most stirring and most prolific of great events in the world's history. When I look back to the year 1821, I seem to be in a new world. I have seen a whole generation and two-thirds pass away. Those who were sixty then have long since passed away, and even those of fifty, and I may add, those of forty and thirty. Few of them remain, at any rate. The images of the departed seem to appear as they sat before me in their different places in this house. Not one, I believe, who was then a member of our communion is among the living now. Those who were then youths of twelve and fourteen now belong to the older class of people. I am ministering to the great-grandchildren of those that formerly called me. I can go a step farther and say that I am in many cases ministering to the children of their great-grandchildren. And to me it is a delightful fact that the attachment of the fathers and mothers has been transmitted to their descendants, undiminished."

After Rev. John Hart was called in 1875, Dr. Ludlow lived with his son-in-law, A. T. Hoff, on the river road below Neshanic Station until the time of his death, February 19, 1878. The church was appropriately draped for the funeral and the congregation bore all the funeral expenses.

During his active pastorate, Dr. Ludlow received into the church 728 members, baptized 910 infants, solemnized over 500 marriages and preached, including afternoon and funeral addresses, nearly 8,000 sermons.

Dr. Ludlow is remembered by the older residents at Neshanic as a sympathetic pastor and friend. He was a careful student, precise and methodical in his scholastic habits. His sermons were masterpieces of thought and diction. He was a very outspoken man. It is told of him that at a certain

funeral, after giving a message of comfort to the bereaved, he suddenly leaned forward over the pulpit and gazing upon the face of the corpse before him, exclaimed, "But as for the deceased, I believe the less we say about him, the better." Rev. Ludlow was made a Doctor of Divinity by Rutgers College in the year 1850. He was perhaps the most scholarly pastor that the Neshanic Church ever had.

Rev. John Hart, D.D., 1875-1922. Pastor Emeritus, 1922—

Turning back to the minutes, we find that Rev. John Hart of the Reformed Church of Locust Valley was called to be minister at Neshanic, January 22nd, 1875, and that on the 20th of April of the same year, the call was approved, accepted, and arrangements were made for his installation.

Rev. John Hart, D.D., was born near Richboro, Bucks County, Pa., on the 17th day of July, 1843. He graduated from Rutgers in '69, from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1872, was licensed by the Classis of Philadelphia immediately after he graduated, and served the Reformed Church of Locust Valley, on Long Island, from the year of his graduation until the spring of 1875, when he accepted the call to Neshanic. He served the Neshanic Church as its active pastor until the spring of 1922, thus completing forty-seven years of distinguished and eminently successful service in the Neshanic congregation. As has been mentioned before, together with Dr. Ludlow, Dr. Hart rounded out a full one hundred years of active ministry at Neshanic. Should we count the five years that Dr. Hart has been Pastor Emeritus, we can say that the two men, up to the present time, have now completed one hundred and six years of connection with this church as pastor. In recognition of his long and devoted service, as well as for his natural talents and abilities, Rev. Hart was made a Doctor of Divinity by Rutgers University, his Alma Mater. Dr. and Mrs. Hart moved from Neshanic in the year 1922 and now live at 45 Mine Street, New Brunswick, N. J. Although he is now in his eighty-fifth year, Dr. Hart is still in splendid health. "His eye is not dim nor his natural force abated." He is seen quite frequently at Neshanic and participates as of yore in nearly all the special activities or exercises of the church. He, himself, admits that no other place but Neshanic will ever seem like home to him.

Minutes of Dr. Hart's Pastorate

A minute examination of the minutes would, of course, be fascinating but, since time and space forbid, let us go over

the minutes in less careful fashion, touching, for our purpose, only the high spots.

Among the first seven received into the church by Dr. Hart were Mr. and Mrs. S. D. Opie who were accepted into membership June 12, 1875. At the same service, John Hart Wert, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Wert, was baptized. The new minister seems to have come into a very sudden popularity. Dr. Hart, however, in spite of his popularity, soon had his first "trial" for a case of drunkenness, profane swearing and conduct unbecoming a professor of the religion of Christ" came up, before his first year was finished. The upshot of the case was, according to the minutes, "much discussion—but no action."

In the spring of 1876, Rev. Hart reported to Classis a total of 195 families and 234 communicants.

It is most interesting to read in the record of these early years of the infant baptism by the Reverend Hart of members now in the prime of life. In passing, let me give you a word of advice to all Neshanic ladies baptized here in infancy: "There is no use trying to hide your ages from your pastor."

In the year 1877, Mr. Gilbert Lane was appointed to "superintend the planting of trees around the yard fronting the church." So those trees must be fifty years old.

The new school-house was occupied October 6, 1779. The consistory had voted to deed the plot of ground to the school district but the pastor refused to sign the deed "on the ground that the consistory had no right to give it." There is a deed in the church safe deeding the whole parcel of land back to the church so let no one try to start another church trial about that affair.

An envelope system was suggested by one of the progressive brothers way back in 1879, but the consistory considered the quarterly payment plan better. However, by December, 1880, the consistory seems to have been driven to the envelope system for a thousand envelopes were procured and baskets in which the offerings were to be received.

In the pastor's consistorial report to classis of 1880, there are a few sentences which, if they were not dated, one might suppose had been written by some pastor in this year of grace, 1927. We quote: "All our services are well, even largely attended, except the prayer meetings. The number of professors who attend upon this branch of divine worship is very small. There are a few who are always there, unless genuine hindrances keep them away, but many make no effort, so it

seems, to come out. This is a matter of real sorrow and regret. We have preached the duty of it and exhorted but with little apparent effect."

On a Sunday in September, 1880, \$785.00 was raised to clear off a church debt. In September, 1881, new hymn books of the Reformed Church in America were introduced.

On the last Sabbath in March of 1885, Rev. Hart completed his tenth year of service at Neshanic. In that time he had received into the church by certificate 97, on confession, 135. He had baptized 64 adults and 101 infants, had officiated at 165 funerals and 80 marriages. Forty-seven members had died and 77 had been dismissed. There had been raised for benevolences \$3,875, and for congregational expenses \$16,144. The church reported to Classis 160 families and 313 in communion. A Foreign Missionary Auxiliary was in process of being established.

New pews were placed in the church in 1889, the old ones having been taken out and sold. Ninety pews at \$1.10 per foot cost \$742.50. Cushions for the pews were bought from the Ostermoor Company at sixty cents a foot and cost \$399.00. The church was repaired at the same time, and the ceiling frescoed.

John K. Saums, who had served as sexton for fifteen years, resigned in November of 1890, and Mr. Isaac Van Doren was hired to succeed him. Mr. Van Doren began his sextonship on the first of December, 1890, and has been sexton ever since.

The first Harvest Home of which there is any record in the minutes was held in 1890. The receipts were \$261.00, bills, \$94.00, leaving a balance of \$167.00.

In July of 1891, Louis Schenck, a Deacon, was appointed to curtain the upper parts of the church windows to break the glare of light coming through them. On September 3rd, 1892, it was "agreed to accept Mrs. F. M. Labaw's offer of grape-juice for the next communion service." On March 4th, 1893, the choir was relocated in the gallery. On the same date, a certain woman of the congregation was voted \$5.00 from the poor fund "for the loss of her smoked meat by thievery."

Rev. Hart became ill in October, 1893, and was relieved of his pastoral duties, with pay, until January 1st. That he fully recovered, his active presence among us, thirty-four years later, amply testifies.

We read that on December 2, 1893, John S. Amerman, Richard W. Hoagland, and Ezkiel B. Hill were appointed a committee to furnish pipe and tying posts for the grounds. During the past year, a total of four horses has been tied to

these pipes and posts. Ezekiel B. Hill's horse was one of them.

At the same meeting, a bill of \$6.50 was ordered paid to Hill Brothers for "entertaining horses" on the day of the meeting of the Bible Society.

In 1898, the pastor was given permission to change the hymnbooks in the church. These books have been replaced this past summer with the new edition of the Reformed Church Hymnal. The Liszt organ, occasionally used still, was bought the same year.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1902, the church reported 110 families and 193 in full communion. The church, that year, celebrated its One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary. Extensive and substantial improvements had been made in the interior of the church. Stamped steel ceiling and sidewalls had been put on, a representation of the "Lord's Supper" had been hung over the pulpit, the wood of the interior had been newly painted and varnished, a new carpet had been laid, four new stoves had been installed, and the stained glass windows had been repaired, representing an outlay of nearly \$1,600.00. The day of the anniversary, August 21st, was a memorable one in the history of the church. About a thousand people attended the morning exercises and a thousand were fed by the ladies of the church. It was estimated that an audience of 1,500 attended the afternoon exercises. The pastor, John Hart, gave a historical discourse, two ministerial sons of the church, Rev. Wm. Reese Hart, and Rev. Wm. Hall Williamson, followed him with addresses, as also Rev. P. M. Doolittle of North Branch, a son-in-law of Dr. Ludlow. Twelve pastors of neighboring churches participated in the afternoon exercises. Various relics connected with the history of the church were on exhibition.

The concrete platform in front of the church was laid in 1904. The pulpit Bible was a gift from Mr. A. A. Cortelyou in the year 1906. The Bible that preceded it is still in the possession of the church as is also the old Dutch Bible dated 1745 which was used by the church "Op de Milston" and by "Neschennick". But where are the Bibles that were used in the intervening years?

On the 6th of April, 1907, Miss Anna Case, then soloist in the Neshanic Church, was released by the consistory "to accept a more lucrative position in the Presbyterian Church at Plainfield, N. J." It seems unnecessary to add that Anna Case is now a star in grand opera.

A study of the statistical reports of the church would lead one to suppose that the church reached a low water mark in about the year 1912. There were then ninety families connected with the church and 146 members in full communion. From that year on, the church again began to gain until now the figures stand at 124 families and 209 members.

The asbestos roof was put on the church in 1912 by R. W. Hoagland and his helpers. This interesting item appears in the minutes of 1913: "A congregational meeting was called for with the usual result of non-attendance by the congregation and not all the consistory." The present pipe-organ was bought and installed in the year 1915. The duplex envelope system was adopted in 1916. The chapel was enlarged in 1920.

On October 16, 1921, it then being one hundred years and one month since Dr. Ludlow, Dr. Hart's predecessor, had been ordained and installed at Neshanic, Dr. Hart proposed that the congregation be on the lookout for a new pastor and that upon his installation, he, himself, become Pastor Emeritus. The Consistory reluctantly agreed to his proposal.

On the first of October, a most unique service was held commemorating the completion on September 5, 1921, of the one hundred years of the two pastorates. Dr. Hart reviewed the one hundred years. Rev. Harris A. Freer brought the greetings of the Classis of Philadelphia, greetings from the churches of Readington, Millstone and Harlingen, churches formerly associated with Neshanic were brought by Revs. Wyckoff, Charles Corwin, and Sahler, Rev. E. G. Read brought the greetings of the Ludlow family, Peter B. Hall of Bound Brook represented former members, and the closing addresses of the day were made by Dr. J. S. Gardner and Rev. Wm. Reese Hart. In appreciation of their long and faithful labors at Neshanic, the congregation and community presented them with a purse of nearly \$1,400.00.

Dr. Hart continued as active pastor until the end of April, 1922, completing a term of slightly over forty-seven years. We are moved to quote from Dr. Messler's address which he delivered after Dr. Ludlow had completed fifty years at Neshanic: "Some ministers are ambitious of having many calls. Certainly it is a worldly ambition and, not by any means, to their praise. It is thought an evidence of extensive popularity. It is really only the result of a restless spirit. A little circle of knowledge is sufficient for a peripatetic ministry—a year here, three years yonder, and five in another place, but a mind that is capable of bringing out treasures

new and old in such exhaustless profusion for a long period of years, must be a royal mind. It is like a mine the ore of which is rich beyond exhaustion."

We do not want to pass on in our narrative without saying that a large measure of Dr. Hart's amazing success at Neshanic was due to the wise counsels, the discreet judgment, the even-minded balance, and the consecrated devotion of Mrs. Hart. We feel safe in saying that no man whose wife is not a consecrated, loyal worker in the Lord's vineyard can remain for forty-seven years in one charge.

During his ministry here, Dr. Hart received into church membership, 756 members, baptized 456, married 338 couples, and officiated at more than 725 funerals. He is still adding to these records. Quoting the language of the aged apostle Paul, he might well say, "Having therefore obtained help from God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great."

Rev. John James Van Strien—1922-1926

On January 22, 1922, it was unanimously decided by the congregation to call the Rev. John James Van Strien, then in the New Prospect Reformed Church at Pine Bush, N. Y. The old parsonage was sold and a new house bought and remodeled. Dr. Hart preached his "Farewell" sermon the last Sunday in April and Rev. Van Strien preached his inaugural sermon on the first Sunday in May.

Rev. Van Strien graduated from Hope College, Holland, Michigan, in 1914, and from the Western Theological Seminary in 1917. His first charge was New Prospect, where he did a splendid work. Upon his arrival at Neshanic, things began to hum with a new activity. Rev. Van Strien transmitted his ceaseless energy, his burning zeal, and his unusual progressiveness to the life and work of the church. His talented wife, a classmate of Mr. Van Strien's at Hope College, was not one whit behind him in vim and vivacity and was of great assistance to him in the several departments of church work. Mr. Van Strien showed extraordinary talent as an organizer. An "Ecclesia Club" was established among the young people of the church and the two Sunday Schools were united into one. A Daily Vacation Bible School was held in the summer months. Larger gifts for benevolences were emphasized and the congregation responded generously. Extensive improvements were made in the church, chapel and parsonage, an external manifestation of the deepening of the inner spiritual life of the church. In short, the four years of Rev. Van

Strien's pastorate were eminently years of great grace and benediction to the church and the Neshanic community.

Naturally, the attention of several larger churches in the denomination was drawn to such an able and active man and in the spring of 1926, he was called by the Fifth Street Church of Bayonne. Rev. Van Strien accepted the call, much to the regret of the Neshanic congregation, and preached his "Farewell" sermon here on the first Sunday in June.

George B. Scholten—1926—

The present pastor, Rev. George B. Scholten arrived on the 24th of July and preached his first sermon the next day. The Neshanic Church had been vacant for six weeks, the first period of vacancy since the year 1762. There appears to have been such a period between the pastorates of Hardenbergh and Van Harlingen, although we have already seen in our review of the history that Hardenbergh moderated the call to Van Harlingen in the spring of 1761, just before he, himself, journeyed to Holland. For one hundred sixty-five years, the church had not been vacant and even for the six weeks it could not legitimately be said to have been vacant, for did not the church still have a pastor in its Pastor Emeritus?

Mr. Scholten graduated from Hope College in 1911 and from the Western Theological Seminary in 1916. Neshanic is his third charge. We might narrate some of the incidents and events of the past year but we shall approach no nearer to the present for fear of running over into the future and the future is not history. We may more safely leave to the historian of the Two Hundredth Anniversary, the record of the events, the accomplishments and the failures of the present pastorate.

Last spring, the church reported to Classis 124 families, 209 in full communion, 180 in the Sunday School, \$1,046.00 given to denominational objects, and \$4,348 given for congregational purposes. Figures are said to be cold and lifeless, but there they are, anyhow.

If the Neshanic Church's past has been full of glory, it is because of loyalty to the eternal God, who "hath been our dwelling-place through all generations." If our church's future is to be more glorious than her past, we must be even truer to the living faith of our fathers than they were in all their steadfast loyalty to Christ.

One Hundred Seventy-five years! And each one of these years has seen many changes. But there is one who changeth

not, even "Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and today, and forever." "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

GEORGE B. SCHOLTEN,
Neshanic, N. J.
October 5, 1927.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

October, 1927

Pastor Emeritus—Rev. John Hart, D.D.
Pastor—Rev. George B. Scholten.
Elders—Ezekiel B. Hill, William Van Fleet, H. C. S. Sebring, J. Vred Opie.
Deacons—Andrew Housel, Louis Labaw, George W. Amerman, John Bittle.
Clerk of Consistory—George W. Amerman.
Church Treasurer—V. W. Opie.
Church Organist—Mrs. Andrew Housel.
Sexton—Isaac Van Doren.

Sunday School

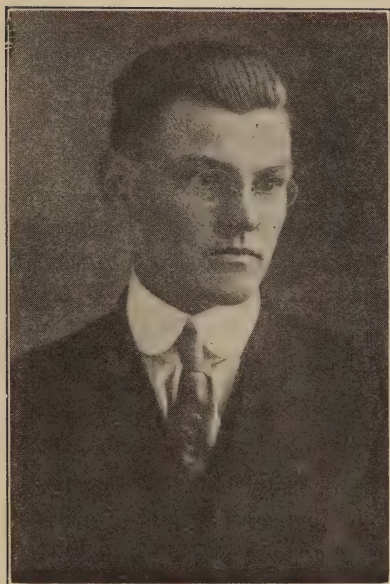
Superintendent—Russell Cray.
Assistant Superintendent—David W. Amerman.
Secretary—Mrs. John Criss.
Registrar—J. Irving Amerman.
Assistant Registrar—George Covert.
Treasurer—J. Vred Opie.
Missionary Superintendent—Mrs. G. B. Scholten.
Superintendent of Home Department—Mrs. John Criss.
Intermediate Superintendent—Mrs. Herbert Bingham.
Junior Superintendent—Miss Dorothy Van Liew.
Superintendent of Primary and Beginners—Mrs. J. Vred Opie.
Cradle Roll Superintendents—Mrs. Andrew Shurts, Miss Laura Lane.
Pianists—Miss Gilberta Horner, Miss Mary Crum.

Ladies' Aid and Missionary Society

President—Mrs. H. C. S. Sebring.
Vice-President—Mrs. George Labaw.
Secretary—Mrs. R. L. Hagaman.
Ladies' Aid Treasurer—Mrs. John O'Brien.
Missionary Treasurer—Mrs. Fred Young.

Ecclesia Club

President—John Bittle.
Vice-President—Orville Shurts.
Secretary—Miss Edna Quick.
Treasurer—Miss Helen Amerman.
Secretaries for the "Christian Intelligencer" and the "Somerset Church News", Mrs. Augustus Hill, Mrs. H. C. S. Sebring.



GEORGE B. SCHOLTEN
The Present Pastor

HECKMAN
BINDERY INC.



APR 97

Bound-To-Please® N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA 46962

